has refused filial love and reverence to the chair of Peter has been hurled from the seat of its greatness, as France, Spain, and Portugal can bear witness. The only true policy, the only true wisdom in our times, is in exalting the chair of Peter, and energetically asserting the pontifical authority, and the universal supremacy of the spiritual order. The salvation of the world in more senses than one depends on the Holy See, and on a loyal submission and filial obedience in all things to the succesor of St. Peter." [17]

[1] *Works,* Vol. 13, p. 467.
[2] *Ibid.,* p. 416.
[3] *Works,* Vol. 11, p. 1 et seq.
[4] *Ibid.,* Vol. 12, p. 352.
[5] *Ibid.,* Vol. 11, p. 120 et seq.
[6] *Ibid.,* Vol. 13, p. 468.
[7] Letter from Father J. P. Donovan, C. M., March 8, 1938.
[8] *Works,* Vol. 11, p. 270 and *Latter Life,* p. 147.
[9] *Latter Life,* p. 92.
[10] *Works,* Vol. 13, p. 440.
[11] *Ibid.,* p. 476.
[12] *Works,* vol. 8, pp. 527, 528.
[13] *Ibid.,* Vol. 11, p. 161.
[14] *Ibid.,* Vol. 13, p. 470.
[15] *Ibid.,* Vol. 11, p. 132.
[16] *Ibid.,* Vol. 10, p. 383.
[17] *Ibid.,* p. 356.

NO SALVATION OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

(From The American Ecclesiastical Review for August, 1947)

" In Religion, What damned error but some sober brow will bless it, and approve it with a text."

Shakespeare, Merchant of Venice.

It seems nearly all who have touched upon Brownson's exposition of the dogma *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus* have overlooked certain psychological factors which in certain instances may have and in others certainly did, incline him to a strict interpretation of that solemn definition of the Church. He did not altogether agree with the liberal concessions generally made by Catholics in regard to the good faith of those outside the Church. There is an interesting story related in the biography of Brownson by his son Henry. The incident occurred before Brownson's conversion to the Church. Brownson had been on a lecture tour and, on his way home, while in Washington, he was one day discussing with Calhoun and Buchanan the necessity of the Catholic Church for salvation, when suddenly Daniel Webster joined them. Buchanan turned to Webster, and said: " We were talking about the Catholic Church, and I, for one, am pretty well convinced that it is necessary to become a Catholic to get to heaven." " Have you just found that out? " asked Webster. " Why, I've known that for years." It should be noted, however, that Brownson's expressions of diffidence regarding the good faith of many outside the Church are of such a general nature as could be based only on general observations—whatever their validity.

It is also possible that Brownson was somewhat inclined to the strict construction of this particular dogma due to circumstances in his own case. Humanly speaking, it was

with great reluctance that he went out from the midst of his Protestant brethren. His desertion from their ranks and conversion to the Church could not be looked upon by them otherwise than as a disappointment—especially by those who belonged to the movement or party of the day with which he himself had been so long associated.

And although his former personal associates and friends may not have subjected him to abuse precisely on the ground that he became a Catholic, nevertheless it does seem that at times he was subjected to such abuse. One day a man by the name of Hoover, from Charleston, S.C., was abusing Brownson to his publisher, Rev. Benjamin H. Greene, as Brownson entered the book-store. Greene said: "There is Mr. Brownson now, talk to him." Hoover thereupon turned to Brownson and violently abused him for becoming a Catholic. Brownson interrupted him, saying: "Another word, and I will throw you over that stove-pipe." As the man defiantly went on, Brownson took hold of his coat-collar with one hand and the seat of his trousers with the other and pitched him over the pipe, which ran from a stove in the front part of the shop to the wall in the rear. The stricter the interpretation Brownson gave to the dogma *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus,* the more plain he was making it to those outside the pale of the Church that as far as he himself was concerned he had no choice in becoming a Catholic.

However much one might discount these reasons in the case, certain other reasons there are which most assuredly did influence Brownson to give to the Church's claim of exclusive salvation a strict construction. Because these reasons have been overlooked, a great deal of confusion and misunderstanding seems to have existed in many minds—those of biographers and contributors to periodical literature—concerning Brownson's interpretation of the dogma *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus.* But this confusion and misunderstanding need not have existed if Brownson had been read chronologically on this theological theme. No one will ever rightly understand Brownson's interpretation of this dogma who has not first read carefully his article "Recent Publications" with its illuminating introductory remarks on what was to follow so soon. That article is the real key to his whole subsequent formal treatment of this doctrinal matter. This particular article appeared in the April, 1847, issue of his *Quarterly Review,* and was the harbinger of his first *ex professo* treatise on the dogma which appeared in the very next number, the October issue of the same year, under the caption "The Great Question." Although he recurs briefly time and again throughout his writings to this dogma—it seems to have become a sore point with him inasmuch as he had been badly badgered because of the stand he had taken—his other main discussions of this solemn definition of the Church occur in the articles: "Civil and Religious Toleration," "Extra Ecclesiam nulla Salus," and his rejoinder to his critics of the last article. Briefly stated, the doctrine he uniformly set forth and defended in this matter—except perhaps for an *obiter dictum* or two which escaped him during his brief liberalistic period—was that in order to be saved one must be *in re, vel in voto* (in fact, or in desire or intention) a member of the *body* of the Church.

In the article "Recent Publications" Brownson deeply deplored the increasing tendency among authors of the current Catholic popular literature to soften or explain away the qualifications and restrictions which theologians attach to this dogma. (This sort of literature seems to have reached its culmination in our day in A. J. Cronin's *Keys of the Kingdom.*) Such a tendency was only aiding and abetting a fatal latitudinarianism already so rampant and widespread. Against this tendency in popular literature Brownson entered his vigorous protest. Such brief and loose explanations as generally appear in novels, periodicals, news-

papers, and even some *manuals,* he said, and which from these are caught up hastily by careless, half-educated, and unreflecting readers, already under the influence of a wide latitudinarianism, are sure to be given a latitudinarian turn or twist in such wise as to become false in doctrine and harmful in effect. He asserted not only that he himself had been led so to understand those qualifications of theologians when yet a Protestant, but also that although he had never doubted, after the age of twenty, that if our Lord had established any Church at all, it was the Roman Catholic Church, he had been repelled for years—he was forty-one years of age when he became a Catholic—from investigating the claims of that Church by finding Catholics apparently conceding that it was not necessary for Protestants to become united to the Church in order to be saved. Concerning the qualifications of theologians touching this dogma and the popular mind, he said: "Theologians may restrict the language of the dogma, they may qualify its apparent sense, and their qualifications, as they themselves understand them, and as they stand in their scientific treatises for theological students, may be just and detract nothing from faith; but any qualifications or explanations made in popular works, as the general reader will understand them, especially when the tendency is to latitudinarianism, will be virtually against faith; because he does not and cannot take them in the sense of the theologians, and with the distinctions and restrictions with which they always accompany them in their own minds. We never yet heard a layman contend for what he supposed to be the theological qualification of this article of faith, without contending for what is, in fact, *contra fidem.*" [1]

To Brownson's mind, then, the paramount question was: how head off and roll back this rising tide of latitudinarianism? The only answer he could find was to stress the strict construction of the *Extra ecclesiam.* . . . To this he

was already inclined on other grounds. He had learned his lesson well about liberal theology before he ever became a Catholic. In the proclamation of this solemn definition of the Church, therefore, writing in the capacity of a magazine editor, he took a practical rather than a theoretical course in the matter. Dogmatic distinctions he considered largely out of place. They could do no good, and might do much harm. With him, rightly or wrongly, it was all a matter of *polemical policy.* In other portions of his writing he speaks of telling the truth in such a manner as to have all the effects of a lie. Such, he feared, would have been the effect of any but a bold and undistinguished promulgation of the dogma *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus.* He was greatly fearful of giving false hopes to those outside the pale of the Church, and thought there was always less to be apprehended from saying anything that might offend them than from failing to arrest their attention and engage them earnestly in the work of investigation. If we wish to convert those outside the Church, he said, "We must preach in all its rigor the naked dogma. Give then the slightest peg, or what appears so, not to you, but to them—the slightest peg, on which to hang a hope of salvation without being in or actually reconciled to the Church by the Sacrament of Penance—and all the arguments you address to them on the necessity of being in the Church in order to be saved, will have no more effect on them than rain on a duck's back." [2] When speaking of his own conversion he asserted that had he found in Bishop J. B. Fenwick of Boston any but an intransigent attitude in regard to the Church's claim of exclusive salvation when he went to interview him about joining the Church—had Bishop Fenwick shown the least disposition to soften, to conceal or explain away what seemed to him the severity of Catholic doctrine—"I should have distrusted the sincerity of his faith, have failed to give him my confidence, and have lost what I had in his Church." [3]

Perhaps the most popular theory resorted to by the latitudinarians to explain away the necessity of being a member of the Church in some real sense was the theory which seemed to guarantee salvation by asserting the sufficiency of belonging to the so-called soul of the Church though an alien to the body. As Fr. J. C. Fenton has explained, this theory crept into Catholic thought and literature and gained a considerable currency through the misinterpretation and misapplication on the part of certain eighteenth century theologians of the terms *body and soul* of the Church as used by St. Robert Bellarmine in his treatise *De ecclesia militante,* but which he himself had used merely as metaphors in elucidating various portions of his teaching on the nature or component parts of the Church.[4] But Brownson was not to be misled by such a specious theory. The body and soul of the Church, he affirmed, like the body and soul of man are distinguishable but not separable: "The Church is not a disembodied spirit, nor a corpse. She is the Church, the living Church, only by the mutual commerce of soul and body. Their separation is the death of the Church just as much as the separation of man's soul and body is his. Communion with the body alone, on the one hand, will not suffice, and, on the other, to suppose that communion out of the body and independent of it is to fall into pure spiritualism, or simple Quakerism, which tapers out into transcendentalism or mere sentimentalism. Either extreme is the death of the Church, which is always to be regarded as at once and indissolubly soul and body." [5]

Later on he was to write the acute sentence: "There can be no more fatal mistake than to soften, liberalize, or latitudinize this terrible dogma, 'Out of the Church there is no salvation', or to give a man an opportunity to persuade himself that he belongs to the soul of the Church, though an alien from the body." [6]

Brownson hit out vigorously at the fiction of an invisible Church which Protestants fell back on when pressed for an explanation of where then was the Church before Luther and Calvin appeared. "The Church," he asserted, "which Catholics believe is a visible kingdom, as much so as the kingdom of France or Great Britain, and when faith assures us that out of the Church there is no salvation, the plain, obvious, natural sense is, that those living and dying out of that visible kingdom cannot be saved." [7] To yield the necessity of membership in the visible Church in order to be saved would be, he said, to leave "the dogma of faith no meaning which even a Socinian or a trancendentalist has any urgent occasion to reject." [8] And he cited the fact that St. Robert Bellarmine holds, as do most theologians, on the authority of St. Ambrose, that catechumens, dying before receiving the visible sacrament of baptism *in re,* may be saved; but that St. Robert Bellarmine still felt a difficulty in the case, and "labored hard" to prove that "catechumens are after all, in the Church, not actually and properly, but only potentially, as a man conceived, but not yet formed and born, is called man potentially." And he further cited St. Augustine and Billuart to underscore the point that these theologians understood clearly that if they were to count as saved catechumens who die before actually receiving the sacrament of baptism, they were under the obligation to prove that they were members in some real sense, *vel re, vel voto,* of the body of the Church.[9]

Brownson's contention about the inadequacy of belonging merely to the so-called soul of the Church, or of belonging to some sort of an invisible Church or society, has been recently sustained by the Encyclical *Mystici corporis* of our reigning Pontiff, Pope Pius XII. "We deplore and condemn," he said, "the pernicious error of those who conjure up from their fancies an imaginary Church, a kind of a society which finds its origin and growth in charity, to which they somewhat contemptuously oppose another, which they

call juridical. But this distinction, which they introduce is baseless." Brownson's contention on this head seems to have been previously sustained likewise by the Canon Law of the Church, Canon 87, which speaks of baptism of water alone as incorporating into the Church, of bestowing personality in the kingdom of God, a personality which can be restricted in reference to rights by impediments or censures as far as the bond of ecclesiastical communion is concerned. The only medium of union with the soul of the Church, then, is through union with the body.

But some Catholics were shocked, or affected to be shocked, when they heard Brownson proclaiming to the non-Catholic public directly and unequivocally that there is no salvation out of the Catholic Church. They alleged that it was harsh, illiberal, uncharitable to say so. And they proceeded to read the sturdy old reviewer lectures on the wisdom of a studied effort at presenting Catholic truth to the public in a more inoffensive mien. In this matter they held up St. Francis de Sales as a model of sweetness and light. To this, referring to his own conviction in the matter, he said: " We are often reminded when we insist on this, that St. Francis de Sales, whose labors restored over seventy thousand Protestants to the Church, was wont to say that " more flies can be caught with honey than vinegar." This is unquestionably true, but they who are familiar with the saint's works do not need to be told that in his own practice he gave considerable latitude to the word *honey*. Certainly we ask for no more severe and bold mode of presenting Catholic truth, or stronger or severer language against Protestants, than he was in the habit of adopting. Even the editor of his controversial works did not deem it advisable to publish them without softening some of their expressions. In fact, much of the honey of the saints generally, especially of such saints as St. Athanasius, St. Hilary of Poitiers, and St. Jerome, would taste very much like vinegar, we suspect, to some of our modern delicate palates." [10]

In the exposition of this particular dogma Brownson wrote with an absolutely assured pen, because he had gone behind the dogma to find the principle that underlies it. Every Catholic dogma, he affirmed, is but the infallible expression of some great underlying principle which it is the business of the cultivators of the profounder theological science to find out and evaluate. The principle underlying the dogma *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus* is the great truth or principle that " the MAN Christ Jesus is the one Mediator between God and men," and that the Church is, as it were, His visible continuation in society. St. Paul calls it the " body of Christ." To be saved, then, if one is to be saved at all, one must belong in a real sense to the *body* of the Church, *in re, vel in voto*. To assert salvation through the disembodied spirit of the Church would be meaningless, since the Holy Ghost did not become incarnate, is not the one Mediator between God and man, and would leave the *flesh assumed* in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the Word no office or representative in the economy of salvation. There can be no exception to this or any other dogma of the Church, for all the dogmas of the Church are *Catholic*, universal, admit of no exception; an exception in regard to this dogma or any other would negative or destroy Christianity as the teleological order established by God. It was when following this line of theological reasoning that he pointed up the little word *omnino* which appears in the original definition of the Fourth Council of the Lateran: " Una vero est fidelium universalis ecclesia, extra quam nullus omnino salvatur." [11]

In his biography of Brownson Theodore Maynard criticizes him rather caustically for what he interprets as an expression of contempt for the theologians " who open wide the door of salvation ".[12] But this is a regrettable construction put on the matter. In winding up his frequent discus-

sions of "The Great Question" as a Catholic publicist, Brownson said: "We have not presumed to question the explanations modern theologians give of the dogma; we say not *exceptions,* for every dogma is catholic, and what is catholic, as we have said, admits of no exception. We have only endeavored to fix after theological reasoning and the greater theologians the limits of these explanations, and thus check the latitudinarianism which the popular understanding deduces from them." [13] After showing that a single exception to this dogma would destroy the whole teleological order as established by God, Brownson immediately observed that *as a consequence of this* even those theologians "who by their explanations open wide the door of salvation, labor with all their might to prove that those who apparently die outside of the Church, and whose salvation, they tell us, is not to be despaired of, do not really die out of her communion, but, in fact, in it, and as Catholics." [14] Although censured rather magisterially by Mr. Maynard, this it would seem is the correct statement of what every catholic theologian must maintain and is bound to show in regard to those who are saved, that is, they must die as Catholics, *vel re, vel voto.*

Orestes Augustus Brownson never wasted any time in his day fighting windmills or straw-men. He always attacked the enemy that held the field or was moving on to the field. The latitudinarianism or religious indifferentism he found devouring men's souls in his day, and which is devouring them with a ten-fold greater voracity in our own day, he attacked with every weapon he could bring into play from his gigantic intellectual armory. If he slew not this voracious dragon, it was no fault of his own. His was a most valiant fight for what he considered to be the real significance of the Church's claim of exclusive salvation, because he could not bring himself to believe that it is a small matter whether one belongs to the Church or not, whether

one gains or loses Heaven forever.

1 *Works,* Vol. 19, p. 173.
2 *Ibid.,* Vol. 20, p. 412.
3 *Ibid.,* Vol. 14, p. 475.
4 Cf. *The American Ecclesiastical Review,* CIX, 1 (Jan., 1944), pp. 48-57.
5 *Works,* Vol. 5, p. 570.
6 *Ibid.,* Vol. 20, p. 414.
7 *Ibid.,* Vol. 19, p. 173.
8 *Ibid.,* Vol. 5, p. 563.
9 *Ibid.,* Vol. 20, p. 398.
10 *Ibid.,* Vol. 5, p. 551n.
11 Cf. *Ibid.,* Vol. 20, p. 392 ff.
12 Orestes Brownson, Yankee, Radical, Catholic (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1943), p. 390. cf. also p. 167. Although a learned man in many respects, Mr. Maynard showed plainly that he was not qualified to expound this dogma of the Church. Nor did he at all rightly understand or fairly present Brownson's noble and persevering efforts to prevent as far as possible a misunderstanding in the popular mind of this solemn definition of a General Council dealing with the issues of life or death for the soul.
13 *Brownson's Quarterly Review,* 1874, p. 448.
14 *Ibid.,* p. 226. Even the erudite and acute Jesuit, Wilfrid Parsons, thought he was making a point against Brownson when he charged him with holding "the extraordinary view that only those in visible communion (with the church) can be saved." (cf. *Catholic World,* Vol. CLIII (1941), p. 396 et seq.) However, as Brownson himself clearly pointed out, he did not hold that whoever is not *actually* a member of the visible *body* of the church cannot be saved, but rather that "whoever is not a member, *at least an inchoate member,* of the body of the church cannot belong to the soul of the church, and therefore cannot be saved." (Quarterly Review, 1874, p. 436) What Brownson's whole school of critics in this matter seem to have missed is that we are not here dealing with a crotchety interpretation that was just Brownson's, for his original exposition of that solemn dogma in 1847 was written at the "command" of Bishop Fitzpatrick of Boston, and "was revised and approved by him before it was published." Brownson estimated Bishop Fitzpatrick to be "the soundest theologian" he had ever met. Brownson knew well, too, that Archbishop P. Kenrick of Baltimore, whom some rate the foremost theologian our country has produced, was in agreement with him. When the archbishop contributed an article to Brownson's *Review* on Dr. White's "Life of Mother Seton", while "seeming at the outset to make the most liberal concessions to the latitudinarian theologians who would seem to hold that nobody but bad Catholics is in danger of being damned, he concluded by being more rigid and exclusive if possible, than the *Review* had ever been." (*Ibid.,* 439) Archbishop Kenrick's article may be read in Brownson's *Review,* 1853, p. 165.

The second last paragraph of the article did not appear in the *American Ecclesiastical Review.* It was dropped by the editor, no doubt because it is extraneous to the real essence of the argumentation.